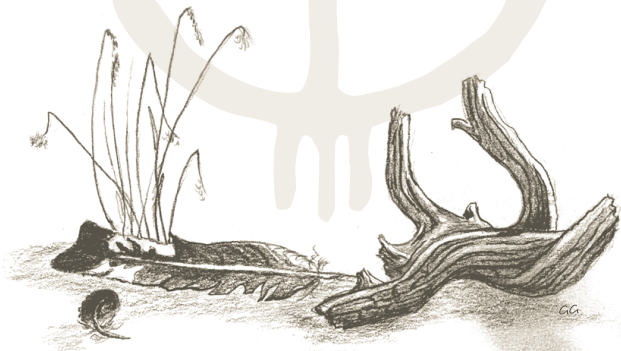


Mindfulness in Nature





WINDFULNESS IN NATURE

*- the road to knowledge
and awareness*

Training attendance and attention through natural observation

A clean mind is a fundamental prerequisite for a full perception of natural stimuli. This cleaning process occurs quite naturally in a longer stay in nature, if you give the time to stay out without too intrusive time limits.

- Forget the time -

Please remove watches and find situations where the internal biological clock gets an opportunity to prove its existence. Other factors than social schedules are allowed to dictate the acts in nature: hunger, thirst, terrain, weather and wind will be decisive time-space dividing factors during the nature visit.

A full understanding of the concept of “living in the moment” is significantly facilitated in a completely natural situation.

- Slow down -

One of the best ways to avoid the trap of time is to slow down any movement when experiencing nature. Go slowly, talk slowly, eat slowly, take your time during all the parts that make up your stay in nature. This is an important prerequisite in the search of “flow”.

- Sit down -

Sitting down with your back comfortably leaning against a stone or a tree without moving or speaking slowly opens a door to nature's forever ongoing drama. Animals, previously intimidated, sometime return out of pure curiosity and resume their interrupted activities, revealing their secret daily routines for the viewer who melt into the background as an all-seeing eye.

- Leave worries behind -

Say the following: "Listen to me, mind, soul and body. Hereby I give you permission to leave concerns of my urban life behind: job, money, politicians, duties and liabilities, and all old failures."

- *Observe silence* -

In our urban lives, we are very caught up with verbal communication. In accordance with the aggressive expansion of our Western culture, we argue, discuss and criticize instead of creating the conditions for a deeper communication - positive and total interaction. In nature, much of this interaction takes place in silence. Most species communicates quietly, briefly and perhaps perhaps only in certain periods of the year. All people staying longer time in nature develops something of a sign language.

- *Stop analyzing* -

The incessant babble is just a part of the problem. Our thoughts are now a constant internal gibberish that we today find it difficult to think of an experience without the eternal inner commentator. This is a barrier between us and the experience. The rational assessment, the comparison, the analysis is what screens us from a deeper experience of reality and the beauty beyond words.

- Remove all names -

Our culture has a tendency to not only name everything but also to catalog and classify all into a system. A telling example is the stressed ornithologist who is doing everything they can to tick off every Swedish bird in the artist and become a full member of the "330 Club". His perception of a rare bird may be very limited compared to the unskilled child, fascinated by the little bird's sympathetic water dance. Learn the soul of the crow before you dismiss it as "just a crow".

- Follow your heart -

When you take the step out into the wild, let your natural impulses and your curiosity override your schematic programming. Rely upon the fact that large part of these impulses are controlled by inherited instincts that will guide you in your journey through the terrain.

Do you want to climb up a tree, just do it. Do you want to add you on a warm mossbed, just do it. Use your spontainity and adventurousness in a playful way.

- *Put away your prejudices* -

One of the worst attitudes to carry with you into the wild is the preconceived idea of how it will be out there. Not even a skilled wildlife person can predict what will happen during the most trivial stay in nature. Expect surprises and you shall get them! No one can know how the adventure will turn out. This is the nature of adventures. Do not commit the mistake of believing that you have already seen everything there. In fact, you hardly even begun to really see it. Study children's behavior in nature and copy it.

- *Reconcile yourself with nature* -

Refuse the role as the passive observer on the side. Do not separate yourself from the site. Embrace it, and let yourself be embraced by it. Literally dive into it, creep into it, grab it, feel it. Then you may begin to experience its beauty and power. Seek it when it is in rebellion. When you think that it threatens you it cries after your joy full attendance.

- Ignore the uncomfortable -

When you stay in the wild, you'll be sweaty, dirty and bitten by insects. These phenomena are part of the price that all must pay for the privilege of being in nature. One cannot screen yourself off from the elements without reducing the capacity to experience them. Celebrating the less uncomfortable and they will cease to bother and distract you.

- Learn from the animals and plants -

It will be necessary to rethink our relationship to animals, we really should understand our role in nature. We must begin to see the animals as equivalent, animated, thinking and feeling members of the the living spaces we all share.

We must realize that the foundations of our human psychology has its origins so far back, that most behavioral approaches are prepared to equate these psychological building blocks with the higher animals. Who dare say, today, that a raven cannot think. Who can dismiss the soul of an ant?

By identifying yourself with a specific animal and imitate that animal's behaviour and attitudes in the field we can increase and deepen our experience. Grow some of the qualities that their lives so beautifully express.



Fine tuning of the senses

We suffer from a phenomenon called home blindness, which prevents us to fully experience our everyday life in the city and nature. We wade around in beauty and richness without even reflecting upon it. It often takes a long-way guest to get us to pay attention to what we are so accustomed to, so part of our routines, that we stop to consciously register it.

There are ways to change this ingrained perception of nature close by, methods to see more in nature. To feel deeper and more transformative.

- Take a new road -

We are all people of habits and we prefer to walk familiar paths and trails. How do we make ourselves aware of the sensations on these “tracks of habit”? How shall we behave in order to increase the quality of our experiences in the moment we are not expecting any special experience?

As we approach our home or when we go from the camp-site to the river for water, we can ask ourselves: “Am I looking at the same old things or am I walking the same old path?” Can we change this by taking another way? Watch the goal from a different angle? Focus our attention on something we do not usually watch? Can we get accustomed to not looking at ordinary things in a habitual way? do not usually watch? Can we get accustomed to not looking at ordinary things in a habitual way?

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- *A new point of view* -

Approximately ninety per cent of all time is spent on considering our surroundings in the same way as we always do. We rarely see familiar objects from a new angle - thus they become old and boring after a while. To see where you are going is good, but to see where you are not going is also of merit. Why not go there? Why not try and go there? Why not place yourself on the ground and watch the flower from below, instead of the familiar, typical diagonal top-down angle? Why not lift the little dead deer to see who is hiding beneath, who is made happy by the unfortunate animal? Go to places and corners you normally wouldn't visit. Only the Great Spirit knows what confrontations may arise from such change in behaviour.

- *Avoid tunnel vision* -

Another problem related to observations in nature is tunnel vision. In its extreme form, an effective instrument for primitive hunting, but a great disadvantage for the general observations of common phenomenon in nature. Sad examples are the unaware big-game hunter or the fanatical fly-fisher, only looking down in the mud or the stream to capture the salmon trout.

- Do not strain yourself -

The best instrument to detect motion and thus game is to use the wide, unfocused visual field. This technique is used by indigenous people and many animals species to find huntable game and discover danger. It is performed most easily by looking up at the horizon while allowing the field of vision to widen without focusing on any particular item. It may provide a unsharp but extremely motion-sensitive visual field up to 170 degrees.



Listen to the voices of nature

There is hardly any place on Earth where total silence prevails. A quiet place is only silent in relation to another place which we describe as noisy. Not even a desert in the night is quiet, or a dark, deep forest at dusk the last minute. Here stands a symphony orchestra of more or less subtle instrumentalist in readiness. A nibble under the moss, the death cry of a hare on the moor, the sneeze of an owl in the oak tree field. All these voices bear their message to us, reveals to us the recent events in the area. All we need to is to listen and learn to interpret what we hear.

- Deep Listening -

Unfortunately we live in a world that is the sound polluted. From the inaudible infrasounds to drills and rock music. If we do not turn off our hearing to protect us, we become deeply stressful. Few people today have demands on their sound environment. Instead, we turn on the radio as a thoughtkilling anxiety protection, in order to stop thinking and feeling and hearing that inner voice. The changeover to “natural hearing” can therefore be difficult for many people.

Music related. The musician or trained music-listener can in a complex orchestral piece discern almost all instruments working together as part of

the symphony. She hears the subtle glissando given by the violin against the massive fond of basses, horns, trombones, and the rapids of flutes. She discerns the chirping oboe in the crescendo, and can thus fully experience the richness and variations of the symphonic piece.

In the same way the man of nature hears the symphony by the sea or the orchestra in the forest. The cry of the raven over the the storm or the unassuming whistle of the sparrow owl.

This hearing is best done with closed or blinded eyes at a well chosen spot in nature.

How many different sounds can you discern

How many different sounds can you discern and identify? Which of them seem to communicate with each other? Which harmonies arise when they cooperate?

Furthermore, the discovery of sound works towards a location and reinforcement (selective hearing). In turn, this leads to identifying the source of the sound and assessing the distance to it. Another important dimension of interpreting sound is the understanding of the indirect sources of sound or reductions of the soundpicture. The sudden hawkalarm from the jay and the squirrel. The raven's angry bark against the eagle overflight. The nightingale's sudden silence after the fox intrusion in the bush.



*To appreciate natural
fragrance*

Smell is compared to the other senses the one we least use and appreciate. It is the sense that we can most easily do without in an urban or natural survival situation. Yet it is the smell stimuli that plays on our deepest strings. The juicy scent of moss soil. The flower meadow, with its stunning fragrance. The place where a deer took a night's rest. In the air, there are endless combinations of molecules dancing about, creating the fragrance image that gives us conscious and unconscious associations and images.

- Identification of plant and
animal smells -

With closed eyes you smell a number of different herbs and try to identify them. The exercise can be carried out in the darkness of the night. Meetings with animal scents in the night is also an interesting theme to try to organize. The burrow of the badger och fox or deer scratch marks. The dramatic confrontation with the smell of carcass. Smelling each other while lying on the ground, face down in the moss, with eyes closed.



Deep Awareness training - Start Pay Attention -

We have all, sometime, thought about how much we depend upon the sense of vision. Most of us are so dependent on sight that we let it push other senses away. Thus, they become dull och decline. One of the most effective means to renew the sense of smell, the feeling at the tip of our fingers or sole of our feets, balance and hearing, is to screen of the dominant perception-channel of vision. Without vision, the other senses automatically compensate to create a picture of the environment as complete as possible.

- Blindfold walk -

We draw a hundred meters long string through the woods, the marshland and water. We draw the string through varied and challenging terrain. We take on our blindfolds, take off our shoes and walk slowly along the path the string leads us. We walk slowly and explore different objects on the way. We notice how the uneasiness disappears, as we get used to rely on other senses. We notice how our walking style becomes softer and more floating.



*Towards a deeper
awareness*

Man is not only a body with sensors that mediate stimuli that forces her to react. No, she is also a mysterious source of feelings, intuition, imagination and creativity.

In this section we will see how we can sink deeper into the five senses, down to the bottom of the ocean of unconsciousness towards deeper forms of consciousness.

- The four veils -

There is a present where we can feel intimately connected with everything around us, where nothing can move without us knowing it and where we cannot do anything without feeling how that affects everything else around us.

To be able to experience this gift of unity with the universe we must pass the four veils, the four levels in our consciousness. The path is not simple or straightforward. It requires great dedication, will and faith to reach or just touch at any of the deeper states of being. I permits. Notable is that indigenous people, who analyzed our culture and our way of being, consider that our normal consciousness is deviant and unnatural.

The first veil is truly a heavy veil. Behind it we only reach a very limited part of the truth about reality and its possibilities. The complete picture, we only get by passing through all four veils.

- » Beyond the first veil we reach a state of serene relaxation.
- » Beyond the second veil we reach beyond our physical body.
- » Beyond the third veil, we start to have a feeling for the harmony and balance of the whole creation.
- » And when we have reached beyond the fourth veil, we know of no difference between ourselves and the universe. The suspension of our state of being particular is total presence... total love.

Modern psychology defines these state of being as Beta, Alpha, Theta, Delta and Gamma waves.

Beta waves: wakefulness and focus, movement, thoughts and emotions; dynamic or chaotic, anxiety, agitation, aggressiveness.

Alfas waves: Inner calm and silence without tension and anxiety, body contact, high concentration and sensory perception ability, the immune system alert.

Theta waves: Often achieved in the moment before falling asleep; extremely increased sensory capacities, intuition, para normal activity, similar to a

hypnotic state of mind. In nature, the state of wordless communication and intuitive experience of coherence of the life flow.

Delta waves: The deepest level of consciousness. Unclear. Cloudlike. Hard to grasp on a scientific level. Touched by schamans and yogis only temporarily.

Gamma waves: Gamma rapidly synchronizes the diverse bits of information from each area into a meaningful hole. Like a Swiss-army knife of brain frequencies



Imagination and intuition

Two of the key elements in constructing a deeper consciousness is imagination and intuition. Imagination is the ability to form mental images. These image series or

scenarios are used to create expectations of potential future opportunities. These in turn produce the expectations that reinforce attention. Moreover, attention provides the possibility to look beyond the actual event itself in the now. Intuition, the lifeblood in all mastery.



Empathy and humility

All types of animals and nature observation requires a special form of humility and respect for other life forms in their own right, more than their utility value. Observers must be unselfish enough to see that other creatures have desires, needs and rights similar to their own. She must be willing to recognize the link between himself and the plant or the animal, and on this basis recognize that all what he does with the Earth is he doing on himself. In its highest form, this awareness requires a responsibility not only for her own families and property, but a total responsibility for the entire planet and the family of all living things.



The vision quest

Another instrument used by the North American indigenous people was The Vision Quest. A sacred ritual by which young people had their protective spirits and sealed the relationship with the tribe. It was also used by clan elders and shamans to bring solutions to the personal problems and clan issues. In this ritual, the deepest corner of the soul was challenged with the individual and collective best in mind. Sometimes great prophecies arose that came to be met in their entire extent, while

some of them are yet to be completed in this moment. Their wise men saw through the white man's innermost, predatory being. What their prophecies did not foresee was that the same white man now turn to them with a prayer for guidance and salvation. In today's scientifically educated society, with a nascent knowledge of the mechanics of ecology, we realize that they lived in the truth of the psycho-physical ecology. For many of the native americans The Vision Quest was called "the little death" - death of an old life style and the beginning of something new.

The *Nature quest* that has been developed together with Indigenous elders and Shamans for 30 years back and offers by **Nature Academy Learning Lab.**



Movement and camouflage

- Stalking -

In nature, the best discoveries are often made while sitting still, but it would be foolish to sit still all the time. There are many ways to observe nature when moving through the terrain, such as hunting, fishing, hiking in general or reconnaissance.

Moving in the woods is a natural continuation of the stationary periods of concentrated observation.

Different ways to creep, crawl and climb helps us to not only avoid discovery by wild animals, but also maintain a deep level of relaxation. In fact, movement- and stalking techniques creates a shift in attitude, which in turn influence our expectations and becomes self-fulfilling prophecies. A kind of walking Tai-Chi, which puts the walker in a meditative state. A kind of physical mantra that deepens concentration and shows the way to proximity and association. The awareness of the possibility to move unheard and unseen through the forest contributes to deepen and broaden the interaction with the surrounding elements in the forest.

In fact, the slow, quiet and stealthy movement, is a generally applicable rule for most land-based

species (with the exception of some species mating periods). For everyone but us, the modern man. Few of us has reflected upon the fact that the way we walk is completely unnatural and far from the original truth. In our urban life, awareness of various circumstances in our environments causes different ways of walking, reflecting our attitudes and expectations. Fear, stress, hunger, anxiety and various sexual behavior creates different way of walking, body postures, head postures and eye play. Unaware of the different natural phenomena around us in nature deprives us from the adequate movement pattern in a given situation. To walk in a correct way, adjusted to the situation, is a bigger and more complex art than free-climbing on vertical cliffs.

Different gaits are with us just as inherited as in horses but like our born, specially trained riding animals, we can not step out into nature and begin to move like our wild relatives. We have to train, rehabilitate, and *Get WILD* again ...

The essence of stalking is to move so slow, quiet and silently, that your presence is not noted. Becoming a predator. Indians achieved remarkable results with their stealth technologies, both in battle and hunting. They could sneak so close to a wild animal that they often could touch them with hand. They developed different gaits, which were given names after the animal they walk or attitude they imitated, like Fox walk, Fox run, trail walk, Weasel walk, Weasel sneak.

This nomenclature of walking is not only of practical character. There is a ritual and spiritual dimension, coming from the deep respect and sense of brotherhood these indigenous people felt for the wild animals they shared the living space with.

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This material is partly based on books by Tom Brown and and teaching by John Stokes, The Tracking Project and John P Milton, The Way of Nature.